



## NEWS RELEASE

**NEIL ABERCROMBIE**  
GOVERNOR

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### **Measures to Improve Criminal Justice System Become Law**

HONOLULU – Governor Neil Abercrombie today signed into law a comprehensive policy package contained in two measures – House Bill 2515 and Senate Bill 2776 – designed to lower recidivism, increase efficiency in the criminal justice system, and ensure accountability of people convicted of crimes. The bills are based on recommendations of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI), a data-driven approach Hawai'i is using to reduce corrections spending and generate savings to reinvest in strategies that increase public safety.

"From my first day on the job as Governor, I said we will bring our inmates housed in mainland facilities back home and keep our taxpayer dollars in the state," said Governor Abercrombie. "With the enactment of these bills, we are taking the next step forward in our commitment to taking control of our criminal justice system, bringing back vital resources to Hawai'i and strengthening communities for people to return to."

The bill signing comes approximately one year after the establishment of the 24-member Justice Reinvestment Working Group, an inter-branch and bipartisan group of state officials and stakeholders. The group, which includes Governor Abercrombie, Senate President Shan Tsutsui, and Chief Justice Mark Recktenwald, came together to review a system-wide examination of Hawai'i's criminal justice system by the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center in partnership with the Pew Center on the States and the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA).

CSG Justice Center staff identified inefficiencies that contributed to a growing jail and prison population. Despite declining crime rates between FY 2000 and 2010, the state experienced significant growth in both the prison population and corrections expenditures. Due to a lack of space in prisons, approximately one-third of Hawai'i's prisoners are housed in costly mainland facilities.

Senate President Shan Tsutsui, who introduced SB 2776, said, "The JRI bills were a culmination of months of work and the support of many government officials and stake holders. Adding resources and staff to our pre-trial detainee processing, the Paroling Authority, and probation will certainly help in our efforts to improve our outcomes and results."

Hawai'i Department of Public Safety Director Ted Sakai noted: "These policy changes will ensure that we hold offenders accountable for their crimes and that we adequately support victims in their recovery from the impacts they suffered as a result of crime."

Significant changes included in HB 2515 and SB 2776:

- Increases the amount of restitution paid to victims from 10 percent to 25 percent of any deposit made to an inmate's account. *This provision addresses gaps between institutions in helping to recover the crime-related financial losses of victims.*
- Adds 15 staff for victim services in Prosecuting Attorney offices, the Department of Public Safety, and the Crime Victim Compensation Commission. *Victim service personnel will enhance victim notification, restitution collection, and victim safety planning.*
- Invests \$1 million to enhance community-based treatment programs. *Resources will support use of the latest research to inform decisions about how treatment is delivered.*
- Eliminates delays in pre-trial risk assessment for flight and re-offense. *Hawai'i's pretrial process is one of the longest in the nation. Swift pretrial assessments will bring Hawai'i in line with other states and ensure dangerous individuals are not released.*
- Expands the parole board from three to five members. *Two additional part-time members will increase efficiency and ensure the proper attention is paid to determining who is suitable for parole and what programs and treatment needs individuals have.*

"The Justice Reinvestment Initiative will enhance public safety while making the criminal justice system more efficient," said Chief Justice Mark Recktenwald. "The judiciary appreciates all those who contributed to this important effort, including the Council on State Governments, the Pew Foundation, and the Bureau of Justice Assistance. "We also thank Governor Abercrombie for his leadership, and the members of the Legislature for their strong support in considering the JRI legislation that was signed into law today."

Adam Gelb, director of the Pew Center on the States' Public Safety Performance Project, stated: "Hawai'i is demonstrating to states across the nation how to bring together stakeholders and generate effective criminal justice solutions. These policies show how an inclusive, research-based process can produce policies that will cut crime and costs."

"With this signing, Hawai'i has set out to utilize the most up-to-date strategies in criminal justice that are tailored to the unique issues facing the state; this sends a message to other states about the importance of comprehensive data analysis and evidence-based policy," added Denise O'Donnell, Director of the Bureau of Justice Assistance in the U.S. Department of Justice. "We are working with the Justice Center and Hawai'i state officials to determine how we can best support the state's efforts to implement the new policies to meet its goals of reducing the mainland prison population and increasing public safety."

The Governor also signed into law the following public safety related bills:

HB 2599 - amends the law to define how pretrial assessments are generated and requires the Department of Public Safety to supervise persons placed on pretrial supervision by the Court and Director of Public Safety.

HB 2601 - updates the statutes to allow persons authorized by the rules of the court to serve in the legal process and execute specified court orders.

SB 2056 - requires a probation officer, prior to early discharge of a defendant from probation, to report to the court concerning the defendant's compliance or non-compliance with terms of probation.

*The Council of State Governments Justice Center is a national nonprofit organization that serves policymakers at the local, state and federal levels from all branches of government. The Justice Center provides practical, nonpartisan advice and consensus-driven strategies—informed by available evidence—to increase public safety and strengthen communities.*

*The [CSG Justice Center's Justice Reinvestment Initiative](#) to address corrections spending and public safety is a partnership with the [Public Safety Performance Project of the Pew Center on the States](#), with additional support to CSG from the [Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice](#). These efforts have provided similar data-driven analyses and policy options to state leaders in 16 other states. To learn more about the justice reinvestment strategy in Hawai'i and other states, please visit [justicereinvestment.org](http://justicereinvestment.org).*

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